Ulcerative colitis – tests and treatments

- Diagnosis of ulcerative colitis is made by colonoscopy (or sigmoidoscopy) and by examining a tissue sample taken during the colonoscopy.

- Treatment involves drugs to reduce the inflammation and, for severe symptoms, corticosteroids. The drugs can be given as an enema if only the lower large intestine and rectum are affected.

- Drug doses are reduced between attacks, but you need to keep taking them to prevent recurrence of the disease.

- Patients have regular check-ups as outpatients in hospital to monitor their condition. If you have severe symptoms, you may be admitted to hospital for treatment.

- Occasionally, if symptoms cannot be controlled with drugs, it is necessary to remove the colon. If this is the case, the surgeon will make the end of the remaining bowel into a false rectum or into an artificial opening on the surface of the abdomen (ileostomy).

- About 10 years after diagnosis, patients with ulcerative colitis should have annual colonoscopy investigations because in some cases there is an increased risk of cancer of the colon. Regular check-ups will allow early diagnosis and treatment of this disease.